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# S P E E C H

OF

WILLIAM SMITH O'BRIEN, ESQ. M. P.

ON THE

CAUSES OF DISCONTENT IN IRELAND,

Delivered in the House of Commons, on the 4th July, 1843.



DUBLIN :

J. BROWNE, 36, NASSAU-STREET.

1843.



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## SPEECH, &amp;c.

I RISE, Sir, to move, "that this House will resolve itself into a Committee, for the purpose of taking into consideration the causes of the discontent at present prevailing in Ireland, with a view to the redress of grievances, and to the establishment of a system of just and impartial government in that part of the United Kingdom." I have undertaken, perhaps somewhat presumptuously, to set forth the causes of the excitement by which Ireland is at present agitated, and to invite the House to the consideration of those measures of redress, by which alone that agitation can, in my opinion, be effectually suppressed. I do not intend to make a party speech—much that I have to say will not be acceptable to either side of the House, I cannot therefore expect a favourable audience; but I shall feel deeply obliged, if a fair and patient hearing should be accorded to me by your kind indulgence.

I stand here to-night to arraign the British government and the British parliament, for having misgoverned the country to which I belong. I make this charge not on the part of those who delight in agitation. Were I to speak in their name, I should render to you their most hearty thanks, for having, by the course which you have pursued, effectually promoted the objects which they have in view. I appear, on this occasion, on behalf of the class to which I myself belong—on behalf of those who cherish no other desire than to lead a tranquil life in their native land, (I will repeat the sentiment, although it was derided when I used it on a former occasion,) surrounded by a happy and contented population, in the full enjoyment of the free

institutions of Great Britain. If I had brought forward this motion two months since, as I then intended, I might have had some difficulty in awakening the House to a sense of the irritated state of feeling which at present prevails throughout Ireland. The course of events has rendered superfluous this part of my task. The House and the public of England are now fully alive to the formidable character which the Repeal agitation has assumed. They have seen the perfect organization which exists amongst the people of Ireland—they have seen that in three provinces, fifty thousand men can be called together on a notice of forty-eight hours, at any appointed spot—they have seen the receipts of the Repeal treasury rising from five hundred to three thousand pounds per week—they are aware, that not only are the poorer and less instructed masses of the population involved in this movement, but that it also embraces nearly the whole body of the middle classes of the Roman Catholic persuasion, as well as a large number of Protestants; and that the Roman Catholic clergy, with only a few individual cases of exception, take part in, or countenance its progress. It is true, that the aristocracy and landed proprietors, Catholic as well as Protestant, still, for the most part, stand aloof from this agitation; but be assured, that unless your policy be speedily changed, they will not long consent to remain as units, divested of influence in the midst of the population by whom they are surrounded. It is true also, that the majority of the Protestants have hitherto forborne to co-operate in this movement; but as there no longer exists any cause for dissension with their fellow-countrymen, no one can tell how soon the moment may arrive, when they will make common cause for the restoration of the national Parliament of Ireland.

The first question, then, which, under such circumstances, naturally presents itself, is—To what cause may be attributed the present attitude of affairs in Ireland? I know that there are some superficial observers, who imagine that this mighty confederation is solely the work of one man. I am the last person who would depreciate the power of Mr. O'CONNELL. I admit the matchless energy of his character—I acknowledge the influence which he has ob-

tained over his countrymen by his long services, and by his perfect mastery of every chord which can touch their feelings or govern their conduct; but were he possessed of superhuman faculties, they would but little avail to produce such gigantic results, unless he were aided by the conviction of the national mind, as well as by the peculiar circumstances of the social condition of Ireland. To an English audience Mr. O'CONNELL might for ever harangue upon the expediency of dissolving the Union, without producing a desire for its repeal; because he would be unable to convince them that it has been productive of injury to this country. On the other hand, many of those who are now embarked in this great enterprize, are men as calm in their judgment, as capable of discovering the true interest of their country, as little disposed to revolutionary excesses, as any member whom I now address. I do not know that I can better illustrate the tone of feeling which prevails amongst a large portion of the intelligent classes in Ireland, than by reading to the House a letter, upon which, amongst many others of a similar character, my attention has happened to rest. It is written by the Roman Catholic Bishop of the diocese of Ossory, in reply to a communication by which he was invited to attend a meeting for promoting the Repeal of the Union:—

“Dear Sir,

“I was just leaving Kilkenny when I received your letter, requesting me to attach my name to a requisition for a Repeal meeting. The matter was too important for me to decide at the moment.

“I have always felt that the very serious and onerous duties of my profession left me but little time for matters of a nature purely political; and I have still so much reluctance to embark in political agitation, that I must beg most respectfully to decline signing the requisition you have sent me.

“But I hope my feelings on the present subject will not be mistaken. I have always believed that *domestic* legislation must, of its own nature, be the best means of promoting the happiness of a nation; and daily experience convinces me, that the serious evils under which Ireland



labours, cannot be so easily removed by those who are ignorant of their causes, or indifferent to their results. Besides, I cannot but feel that Ireland is not fully represented in the imperial parliament. It is to be deplored, that when the enthusiastic exertions of the Irish people, and the patriotic firmness of the Irish representatives, carried the Reform Bill against English majorities, Ireland did not receive her fair share of the advantages then obtained.

“It does not appear to me that she has her due proportion of representatives in parliament. She certainly has not a parliamentary franchise equal in all respects to the English franchise; and, of course, she has not any thing like a proportionate number of parliamentary electors.

“Under such circumstances we cannot wonder that the wants and wishes of the Irish people, even when made known by a large majority of Irish members, are frequently treated with neglect, if not with contempt; and while such a system is pursued, it would be vain to expect that a loyal and high-minded people would abstain from seeking, by legal and constitutional means, that equality of civil rights which has been so often professed and promised, but not yet fully granted to this country.

“I have the honour to be, dear Sir,

“Very truly yours,

“✠ WM. KINSELLA.

“JOSEPH HACKETT, Esq.”

Is there any thing in that letter which is unworthy of a christian Bishop, or of a sincere lover of his country? Yet its writer arrives at the conclusion that the interests of Ireland require the restitution of its domestic legislature. I would further ask those who believe that the agitation for the Repeal of the Union owes its vitality solely to the influence of Mr. O'Connell, how they account for the universal sympathy which prevails amongst foreign nations throughout the civilized world, all of whom, without exception, regard Ireland as suffering under oppression, and applaud every indication of a disposition to recover its national independence. For my own part, I am deeply



convinced that the present demand for a Repeal of the Union is not a mere unreasoning clamour, raised to serve the purposes of Mr. O'Connell, or of any knot of individuals, but that it results from the deliberate opinion of thousands of intelligent men, who have sunk into a feeling of settled despair of obtaining good government for their country through the instrumentality of British legislation. I am persuaded that an increasing conviction has gradually obtained possession of the public mind in Ireland, which leads many to believe, that the interests and happiness of their country would be promoted by the restitution of self-government under the British crown, in friendly connexion with the remainder of the empire. In arriving at this conclusion many natural feelings must be overcome—many objects of legitimate ambition must be surrendered. There is scarcely a family in the kingdom which is not united with this country by domestic ties; and the people of Ireland may well feel a pride in the greatness of your empire, when they reflect how much they have contributed to its extension. What then are the causes of that universal discontent which has found its expression in the present agitation for the Repeal of the Union? In seeking to develope these causes, I must content myself with merely adverting, in a summary manner, to the various elements which contribute to the general result.

In endeavouring to penetrate the feelings of a people so sensitive as the Irish, it is not enough to consider whether the last act of injustice of which they complain, is sufficient to produce the dissatisfaction which we witness. As they have been perhaps too hasty in their disposition to bury in oblivion the memory of past injuries, when they have perceived a disposition on your part to resort to a kindly and generous policy; so, when they view indications of a return to that system of misgovernment, under which they have suffered so much and so long, the accumulated wrongs of centuries recur to their recollection and inflame their discontent. The philosophic enquirer, who desires to trace national antipathies to their origin, would be compelled, in order to estimate justly the feelings of the Irish people, to search the ancient records of our history. The necessity of compression requires me to dismiss in a few

sentences every thing which occurred previous to the Union. The characteristic features of Irish history may be thus briefly described:—Our nation has unhappily been at all times prone to internal dissension. By taking advantage of those dissensions, the English power first obtained a footing in Ireland. By their promotion conquest was extended. By stimulating and fostering successive rebellions, a pretext was obtained for continued confiscation, until nearly the whole soil of Ireland had been subjected to repeated forfeiture. These confiscations continued until the reign of William and Mary, and were followed by the atrocities of the penal code—a code worthy of the ingenious malice of a demon. The mass of the nation was placed in cruel bondage under the feet of the minority. At length the dominant party found that the interests of the country were sacrificed to their own ascendancy—that England was enabled, by thus dividing the Irish people, to oppress her trade and trample upon her independence. The American war called the nation to arms, and in 1782 the Irish people stood united as one man, presenting to England a demand for their national rights. All their requests, before contumeliously rejected, were now hastily conceded, and Ireland appeared in all the majesty of union and national greatness. Unhappily the same patriotic energy which had wrung from England freedom of trade and parliamentary independence, was not applied to internal reforms. The nation relapsed into apathy. A rebellion, the seeds of which were sown by the principles of the French revolution, acting upon a diseased condition of society, and which rebellion there is too much reason for believing to have been fomented by England, afforded a pretext for the Union. Still the Union could not have been accomplished without the basest corruption. Every one knows that the Irish parliament consisted for the most part of nominees of an oligarchy. Two-thirds of the members of the Irish house of commons were named by individuals. That oligarchy Mr. Pitt bought by titles, by places, and by money. He deceived the Catholics by the promise of emancipation, and thus neutralized, to a certain extent, their opposition. In the mean time the people were prevented by armed force from assembling to petition, and

the national voice was stifled in the utterance of its remonstrance. Thus, by the united influence of corruption, fraud, and force, an Union was imposed upon Ireland, which has never been recognized by the Irish people as a national compact. Its terms were unjust and offensive, and accordingly they have produced, in the continued discontent of the Irish nation, that retribution which always follows injustice.

In passing under review some of the consequences of the Union, we shall have no difficulty in discovering whence arises the desire for its abrogation. The first topic to which I shall advert, is its effect upon the financial relations between Great Britain and Ireland. Upon this point the most extraordinary difference of opinion prevails in the two countries. One can scarcely meet a person in society in England who does not consider it a great hardship, that Ireland should be exempted from any of the taxes borne by England. The first Lord of the Treasury (Sir R. Peel) tells us that Ireland is treated in regard to taxation with peculiar indulgence. Yet in Ireland it is generally believed that grievous financial injustice is one of the consequences of the Union. The light in which this question is regarded in Ireland may be stated as follows. At the time of the Union, the debts of the two countries were respectively:—

	Debt.	Annual Charge.
Funded debt of Great Britain in the year ended Jan. 5, 1801, ...	£420,305,944	£15,800,106
Unfunded do. Exchequer Bills ...	26,080,100	766,480
	<hr/> £446,386,044	<hr/> £16,566,586
Funded debt of Ireland, do. ...	£26,841,219	£1,150,284
Unfunded debt do., Treasury Bills	1,703,915	43,722
	<hr/> £28,545,134	<hr/> £1,194,006
<i>Par. Paper, No. 256. Sess. 1824.</i>		
Total annual charge for debt incurred by Great Britain previous to the Union, ... ..	...	£16,566,586
Ditto, by Ireland, ... ..	...	1,194,006
		<hr/>
Difference, being the amount of separate taxation to which Great Britain is fairly liable on account of debt incurred previous to the Union, ... ..	...	£15,372,580

Assuming that Ireland has been taxed in proportion to its

resources equally with Great Britain since the Union, there ought still to be this difference of taxation; otherwise, the poorer country is called upon to pay the debt incurred by the richer previous to the partnership. But instead of a separate taxation on Great Britain exceeding fifteen millions, the produce of all the taxes to which Great Britain is liable, and from which Ireland is still exempt, exclusive of the property tax, does not now amount to much more than seven millions. The property tax will produce about five millions, of which a portion is derived from the tax on the incomes of Irish absentees. In order to shew that Ireland contributed, to the extent of its resources, equally with Great Britain during the war, I will quote an extract from the report of the select committee of 1815, on the public income and expenditure of Ireland.

“Your committee cannot but remark, that for several years Ireland has advanced in permanent taxation more rapidly than Great Britain itself, notwithstanding the immense exertions of the latter country, and including the extraordinary and war taxes. The permanent revenue of Great Britain having increased from the year 1801, when the amounts were first made to correspond, in the proportion of  $16\frac{1}{2}$  to 10; the whole revenue of Great Britain (including war taxes), in the proportion of  $21\frac{1}{4}$  to 10; and the revenues of Ireland in the proportion of 23 to 10. But in the twenty-four years referred to by your committee, the increase of Irish revenue has been in the proportion of  $46\frac{3}{4}$  to 10.”

The above statement was made by a parliamentary committee at the close of the war. But it may be said, that in the remission of taxes since that time, greater indulgence has been shewn to Ireland than to England. I have moved for a return of the amount of taxes affecting each kingdom, which have been repealed since 1814. That return has not yet been presented. I must therefore rely upon secondary authority, and quote the statement made by Mr. O'Connell, in the debate in the Corporation of Dublin, upon the Repeal of the Union, in which he computed that the produce of taxes affecting Great Britain which have been repealed, amounts to £47,214,338; whilst during the same period the taxes repealed which affected



Ireland, amounted only to £1,575,940, being one-thirtieth—whereas in the imposition of taxes, it was computed that Ireland ought to be subjected to a burden proportionate to that of Great Britain in the ratio of 2 to 15, or  $7\frac{1}{2}$  to 1. The financial jugglery by which Ireland has been brought in as a debtor to Great Britain, has been as follows. Mr. Pitt, in dictating the terms of the Union, assumed that Ireland could pay towards the general expenses of the United Kingdom a contribution in the proportion of 2-17ths, or 1 to  $7\frac{1}{2}$ , although the previous revenue of Ireland had borne to the revenue of Great Britain the proportion of less than 1 to 12. Separate accounts were kept for each kingdom. Loan was added to loan, and placed to the account of Ireland, although over such loans Ireland had no control, until at length the Irish revenue was unable to meet the interest on the nominal debt so accumulated against it. In the mean time taxation had been carried in Ireland to that point at which increased taxation produced a diminution instead of an increase of revenue. At length in 1816, the exchequers of the two countries were consolidated, and since that period successive attempts have been made to assimilate the taxation of Ireland to that of great Britain, until the Irish people will have the privilege of contributing equally with the English towards the payment of the charge on the debt incurred by Great Britain previously to the Union. The people of Ireland are unable to perceive the justice of these financial arrangements; and they feel indignant when they are told upon every occasion on which a grant of £10,000 may be required for Irish objects, that they do not contribute in their fair proportion to the taxation of the United Kingdom, and that England ought not for ever to be made a “milch cow” to Ireland. Those who desire a Repeal of the Union contend, that if that measure were to take place, the financial relations of the two countries would be adjusted on a footing more favourable to Ireland than that on which they at present stand; and that either the taxes upon the principal articles of consumption, such as tea, sugar, malt, tobacco, &c., would be reduced to the standard which prevailed previous to the Union, or that the surplus revenue of Ireland would be applied to the promotion of local improvements. For my own part I am

fully aware that is a subject of great intricacy, and although upon the whole, I am inclined to think that the Irish view of this question is founded on justice, yet undoubtedly much may be said on the part of England, which would lead to a different conclusion. All that I have to ask therefore in reference to this branch of my subject is, that a committee of intelligent and impartial men should be appointed, who may listen to the statements of those who consider that Ireland has sustained a wrong in consequence of the Union, and that the financial relations of the two countries may, for the future, be placed upon some defined and well understood basis, so that we may not be for ever taunted with endeavouring to escape our fair share of taxation, at the very time at which those who have given most consideration to the subject, are of opinion that Ireland has been unjustly dealt with in regard to matters of finance.

Next in the train of consequences which followed the Union, is to be noticed the increase of absenteeism. There are two classes of absentees. One class consists of great English proprietors who have obtained by confiscation large tracts of territory in Ireland. As an instance I may mention, that the greater part of one county, Londonderry, belongs to the London companies. This class is almost of necessity permanently non-resident. It is scarcely to be expected that the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Fitzwilliam, Lord Lansdowne, should live continually in Ireland, whilst they have superior inducements to reside in this country. The other class of absentees consists of the nobility and gentry of Ireland, who were in the habit of resorting to Dublin previous to the Union, but who are now naturally attracted to the seat of government, and whose views and associations become gradually interwoven with English rather than with Irish interests. It is believed, that this latter class would be immediately brought back to Ireland by a Repeal of the Union; and with respect to the permanent absentees, it is conceived that a moderate tax, which would be imposed by the Irish parliament upon non-residence, would compel them either to sell their estates, or to reside in Ireland for a portion of the year, or to yield a pecuniary contribution towards those useful objects which would be promoted without such contribution by their residence.

It is only an act of justice to the right honorable baronet, (Sir R. Peel,) to acknowledge, that to a trifling extent he has conferred a boon upon Ireland, by his imposition of a tax upon absentees, in connection with the property tax. He would now do well to act upon the suggestion thrown out a few evenings since by the noble lord the member for Newark, (Lord John Manners,) and apply to the purposes of local improvement in Ireland, the proceeds of the tax upon Irish absentees. Such a measure is the more justifiable, because, in estimating the revenue to be derived from Ireland by the imposition of new taxes as her equivalent for the income tax, he did not place to its credit the amount derivable from this source.

Not only did Ireland lose by the Union the advantages resulting from the residence and expenditure of a large portion of the wealthier classes, but the drain upon her resources has been still further augmented by the gradual abstraction of all her public establishments. Upon grounds of economy and general policy, I am far from objecting to any consolidation of the public departments which may be attended with diminution of expense, and greater uniformity and vigour of administration; but in withdrawing from Ireland the various fiscal establishments which existed previous to the Union, an attempt ought to have been made to compensate in some other manner the pecuniary loss sustained by such withdrawal. Many opportunities of making such compensation have been neglected. As an instance, let us see how parliament has dealt with Ireland in regard to the naval expenditure of the united kingdom. None of the harbours of England can rival those which we possess. How advantageously some of them are situated for naval expeditions, is proved by the recent rendezvous at Cork, of a fleet destined for some peculiar service, which appears to have a reference to the affairs of the Peninsula; yet there does not exist in Ireland a single naval dock-yard. In this country there are nine—Deptford, Woolwich, Chatham, Sheerness, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Pembroke, Deal, North Yarmouth. In Ireland there is only a small victualling establishment at Cove. I asked a short time since for a return which would have shewn the proportion of the amount voted on the navy estimates, which, during



the last twenty years, has been expended in Ireland. That return having been refused, I have been compelled to make the computation for myself. The results are not placed before the House in so authentic a form as if they had emanated from the department, but I believe that the following statement will be found quite accurate. I have carefully examined the navy estimates for the current year 1843-44, and I find that out of a gross expenditure of £6,579,960, not more than £10,000 will be expended in Ireland, exclusive of the small amount of provisions now purchased there. If it be said that this comparison of the aggregate expenditure with the amount expended in Ireland, is fallacious, because the naval service of Great Britain is carried on in every quarter of the world; this remark does not at least apply to those heads of the naval expenditure which are of a local character. Let the comparison then be confined to those heads:—

	Gross estimate for 1843-44.	To be expended in Ireland.
Admiralty Office ... ..	£125,459	none.
Establishments at home ...	126,813	about £500
Wages to artificers in es- tablishments at home. }	591,951	about 500
Naval stores ... ..	1,117,895	none.
New works and repairs in yards ... .. }	234,868	... 118
Packet service for the Post- Office ... .. }	430,702	... 9,000 for

conveyance of mails between Kingstown and Liverpool—half of which amount ought to be placed to the account of England.

With respect to the army the case is different. I admit that Ireland enjoys a fair proportion of the expenditure of the army, but it has never been insinuated, that any portion of the British army has been stationed in Ireland with a view to give to that country the advantages resulting from its expenditure. The motive which has led to its being placed there is, that the public tranquillity may be secured; and in proportion as that end has been attained by other means, the military force has been withdrawn.

Those who argue against a Repeal of the Union, talk largely of the advantages which must result to a poor country from being associated with one wealthier than itself. If such language have any meaning, it must be, that there is a constant tendency which attracts the surplus wealth from the richer to the poorer country. We have already seen what has been the result of the Union with reference to the expenditure of the incomes of private individuals. Let us now see whether the financial intercourse of a public nature between the two countries, in any degree compensates for the drain upon the resources of Ireland which arises from absenteeism.

I find by a parliamentary paper which was laid on the table during the session of 1842, No. 305, that the balance of remittances between the exchequers of the two kingdoms for a specified period, stands as follows :—

Remitted from the Irish exchequer to the British exchequer between 1795 and 5th Jan. 1842.	...	...	...	£25,995,453
Remitted from the British exchequer to the Irish during the same period,	...	...	...	8,331,274
				<hr/>
Balance remitted from the Irish to the British exchequer,	...	...	...	£17,664,179
				<hr/>
In order to shew that the causes which have produced this result are still in operation, I may mention that of the above amount of £25,995,453, the portion remitted from the Irish to the British exchequer during the nine years ended 5th Jan. 1842, was				
	...	...	...	£6,355,000
Whilst during the same period there was remitted from the British to the Irish exchequer only	...	...	...	80,000
				<hr/>
Balance of remittance from the Irish to the British exchequer,	...	...	...	£6,275,000
Being upon an average an annual remittance of about	...	...	...	£700,000
				<hr/>

Now those who seek for a Repeal of the Union, believe that instead of such an annual tribute being sent out of their country, the supplies voted by an Irish parliament would be expended in Ireland, by Irishmen, for the benefit of Ireland. Is it wise to allow the Irish people to feel, that in regard to the financial connexion between the two countries, the condition of Ireland is worse under the Legislative Union, than it would be if the Irish Parliament were restored?

During the twenty-eight years which immediately followed the Union, all the energies of the Irish nation were concentrated upon the struggle of the Catholics for emancipation, either in resistance to or in support of their claims. I presume it will not be contended that the conduct of Parliament with reference to this question, was calculated to create any very strong feeling in the minds of the Irish nation in favour of British legislation. The Catholics considered that they had been betrayed by Mr. Pitt, when they saw him return to power without stipulating for the fulfilment of the promises which he had held out to them. Their just rights were withheld by the anti-Catholic prejudices of the English people, so long as they could be denied with safety; and at length, when they were conceded, not to a sense of justice, but to apprehensions of a civil war, they were granted in a jealous spirit, and accompanied by offensive conditions. For six years the Catholic relief bill remained a dead letter in regard to appointments to office. It had indeed given to the Roman Catholics increased power, but although it declared their eligibility to official station, yet, with the exception of a few individuals, they remained practically excluded. At length, under Lord Normanby's government, the principle of perfect equality was carried into full effect. He endeared himself to the Catholic population of Ireland, by having been the first viceroy since the revolution of 1688, who did not make the profession of the national faith a ground of exclusion from office. Nor can it be said that he shewed an undue preference for Catholics, for it has been repeatedly stated, that of the persons appointed to situations under his government, a majority were Protestants. I charge the present government with having returned to the former system of

exclusion, and I undertake to shew, that though the Catholics are nominally admissible to every situation, yet that practically they have been all but proscribed. The right honourable baronet (Sir Robert Peel) has refused me a return which would have shewn the religious persuasion of every person who has been appointed to any situation under government since his accession to office ; but I have reason to think that the following list is nearly perfect, as regards the principal appointments made under his administration. It shews the proportion of Roman Catholics advanced to office in a country of which above four-fifths of the population profess the Roman Catholic faith.

Lord De Grey,.....	Lord Lieutenant, .....	Protestant.
Lord Eliot, .....	Chief Secretary, .....	do.
Mr. Lucas, .....	Under Secretary, .....	do.
Sir Edward Sugden, ...	Lord Chancellor, .....	do.
Pennefather,.....	Chief Justice,.....	do
Blackburne, .....	Master of the Rolls, .....	do.
Lefroy, .....	Baron of the Exchequer, .....	do.
Jackson, .....	Justice of the Common Pleas, .....	do.
T. B. C. Smith,.....	Attorney-General, .....	do.
Greene, .....	Solicitor-General, .....	do.
Brewster, .....	Advising Counsel to the Castle, .....	do.
Litton,.....	Master in Chancery, .....	do.
Mr. Long, .....	Register to the Court of Chancery,...	do.
Mr. Kemmis, .....	Chairman of Kilmainham, .....	do.
Messrs. Tomb, Jebb, } and O'Dwyer,..... }	Counsel to the Excise, .....	do.
Mr. A. Bate, .....	Clerk of the Crown for Co. Galway, .....	do.
Mr. Seed, .....	Clerk of the Crown for Co. Limerick, .....	do.
Mr. Starkey, .....	Accountant Gen. to Ct. of Chancery, .....	do.
Mr. Webb, .....	Deputy Keeper of the Rolls, .....	do.
Major Cottingham, .....	Inspector of Convicts, .....	do.
Mr. Shaw, .....	Stipendiary Magistrate, .....	do.
Mr. Brereton, .....	Stipendiary Magistrate, .....	do.
Mr. Butler,.....	Crown Prosecutor of Carlow, .....	do.

The above are all Protestants. Now compare the list of Catholics appointed to office :—

Mr. Coppinger, .....	Assistant Barrister for Kildare, .....	R. Catholic.
Mr. O'Leary, .....	An Office in the Court of Chancery,..	do.
Mr. Kernan, .....	Stipendiary Magistrate, .....	do.



Three Catholics appointed to subordinate situations, against which are to be placed two dismissals of Catholics without cause—those of Mr. O'Brien, stipendiary magistrate, and of Dr. Phelan, assistant poor-law commissioner—for whose removal from office no reasonable ground has yet been assigned. The House, from this statement, will be able to judge whether the present government has been partial or impartial in its distribution of patronage between Protestants and Catholics. It is no sufficient answer to say, as has been said in justification of the government, that they cannot be expected to appoint to office their political opponents. This answer involves the admission that they have forfeited the confidence of the whole Catholic population of Ireland. They first adopt a line of policy which calls forth the hostility of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, and then they make such hostility the ground of their perpetual exclusion from office. But the fact is, that in reality they were not reduced to such a dilemma. With regard to appointments of a political nature, I quite agree that they could not with propriety have taken into their confidence men who had been active partisans of a rival administration; but in regard to judicial station, it is very questionable, under the present circumstances of Ireland, whether a government ought to declare that none of those who peculiarly possess the confidence of the great body of the population, shall be selected for such situations. But even if I were to admit that they could not be expected to raise to the bench such men as my right honourable friend the member for Clonmel (Mr. Pigott), still there are many other Roman Catholics in Ireland, whose moderation in politics would have permitted their appointment to office by the present government. Amongst many whose names occur to me, I shall only mention one, and I select him chiefly because his name is familiar to the House, and because he has been often mentioned with commendation by gentlemen of the Conservative party—I allude to Mr. Howley, the assistant-barrister for Tipperary. I find that in regard to professional standing—a point insisted upon in a former debate by the right honourable baronet (Sir R. Peel)—he was admitted to the bar earlier than the present Attorney-General; and his other professional quali-

fications would have justified his nomination to some of those offices which have been filled with persons whose chief merit appears to have been hostility to the Roman Catholic population of Ireland.

The next great legislative measure by which the interests of Ireland have been affected, was the Reform Act. It will be admitted that the Reform Bill could not have been carried, if it had not been supported by the votes of a majority of the Irish representatives. Yet, in the adjustment of the representation, the claims of Ireland were overlooked. Previously to the Reform Act, both Ireland and Scotland had reason to complain that they were not represented adequately in proportion to their population and resources, in comparison with England; but Scotland had less reason for complaint than Ireland. Yet Scotland obtained an addition of eight members, whilst only five were given to Ireland. This injustice was the more flagrant, because even Lord Castlereagh, when computing, at the time of the Union, the number of members to which Ireland was then entitled, could not, though he took the most unfavourable view of its claim, reduce the number below 108. Notwithstanding such computation, the British ministry gave to Ireland at the Union eight members less than the number to which, by their own admission, it was entitled. It might have been expected, therefore, that in reconstructing the representative system of the United Kingdom, this injustice would have been redressed. Let us now examine the claims of Ireland with reference to representation. The most natural foundation for representation is population. I believe that in the formation of new states in the confederation of the United States, population is the sole basis on which the representative system is constructed. The whole population of the United Kingdom in 1841 was 26,717,091 persons, to which aggregate Ireland contributed 8,175,238 persons. The whole number of members in the house of commons being 658, if the number to be assigned to Ireland were proportionate to its population, Ireland would be entitled to more than 200 representatives. If other elements, such as revenue, exports and imports, rental, be made, conjointly with population, the basis of the computation, this number would be

reduced, according to some calculations, to 170 members—according to others, to a still lower number; but no calculation which can be made on the part of Ireland, will reduce our claim to less than 125 members, being twenty more than we now possess. The detail of the injustice which Ireland has suffered in reference to its representation, is even more striking than the general view here presented. The corrupt borough of Harwich, with its population of 3,829 persons, together with the nomination borough of Ripon, possess as much influence in the legislature as the county of Tipperary, (including the members for Cashel and Clonmel,) with its population of 435,553, and its rental of £886,439. Again, compare the representation of Dorsetshire with that of the county of Galway. The area of Dorsetshire is 627,220 acres; its real property assessed to poor-rate in 1841, £735,234; its population in 1841, 174,743 persons; the number of its members—County 3, Bridport 2, Dorchester 2, Poole 2, Lyme Regis 1, Shaftesbury 1, Wareham 1, Weymouth 2—total 14. The area of Galway is—County 1,485,533 acres, Town 25,059 acres—total 1,510,592 acres; the rental, as estimated by Griffith—County £850,000, Town (excluding the value of the houses) £18,894—total rental £868,894; and if the value of the houses in the town be included, not less than £900,000 per annum. The population in 1841 was—County 422,923, Town 17,275—total 440,198. Members—County 2, Town 2—total members 4. In each of the particulars of area, rental, and population, Galway greatly exceeds Dorsetshire. Yet Dorsetshire has 14 representatives, while Galway enjoys only 4. Though the claim of Ireland to increased representation is scarcely more acceptable to the party on this side of the house, than to that which sits on the opposite benches, I am bound to say that I consider this claim as of primary importance, not only with reference to the interests of Ireland, but also in regard to the ease and satisfaction with which that country may be governed. I do not urge its importance on account of the opportunities of distinction which seats in parliament afford to the active and ambitious minds of a community, nor on account of the patronage which naturally follows representation, nor even on account of the advantages



which parliamentary influence carries with it in the competition of local interests. These considerations ought not indeed to be overlooked. Suppose, for instance, a question arises as to which is the most eligible harbour for a packet station—that of Falmouth or that of Cork—and that the advantages of each are nearly balanced, is it not obvious that the pressure made upon the administration by forty or fifty members connected with the west of England will overbear the representations of ten or twelve members connected with the south of Ireland. The most disadvantageous result, however, arising from inadequate representation, is the necessity which it creates for perpetual agitation. In England the government bends at once to the voice of public opinion, as spoken by a majority of the English representatives; but it is enabled to defy the opinion of Ireland, as expressed by its members in parliament, in consequence of the paucity of their number. Hence arises the necessity for constant excitement in Ireland, to reinforce and give effect to the representations of the Irish members. Thus the seeming advantage which England appears to possess over Ireland in regard to representation, is countervailed by an extraneous power created by your injustice, which repairs by an action on the government, of a character by no means desirable in itself, the wrong committed towards Ireland.

If the number of our representatives is inadequate, not less so is the constituency by whom they are elected. I shall not now accept the challenge offered by the noble Lord, the Member for Lancashire, (Lord Stanley,) to institute a comparison between the parliamentary franchise of England and that of Ireland. It is scarcely possible to adjust the elements required for such a comparison, because there are some franchises in England to which we have in Ireland none analogous. The conclusion, however, to be drawn from a comparison of the number of persons qualified to vote in each country, sufficiently proves, that in proportion to its population and resources, Ireland does not possess an electoral body nearly as numerous as that of England. The population of Ireland in 1841 was 8,175,238 persons. The number of electors registered between the 1st February, 1835, and the 1st February,

1843, was as follows :—Counties, 63,389 ; cities, 27,091 ; boroughs, 19,465 :—Total 109,945, being less by 14,332 than the number registered during the five years previous to the 1st of February, 1837. But, inasmuch as this registry extends over a period of eight years, a large deduction, probably not less than one-third, ought to be made for double registries, deaths, and expiration of title. After these deductions have been made, the actual number of persons qualified to vote, cannot be assumed to be more than 80,000, or say one per cent on the population. If property be regarded as the legitimate basis of the franchise, the number of electors is almost equally inadequate in reference to this test. Assuming the rental of Ireland to be £15,000,000 per annum, which is not far from the truth, there would not be more than one elector for every £187 10s. of rental. Now, in the first year after the Reform Act, the proportion of electors to population in England was, in counties as 1 to 24, and in boroughs and cities as 1 to 17. The number of electors in England has since that time considerably increased. In Ireland the constituency is yearly diminishing. So much for the general view. Now look at the detail. Assuming first that the parliamentary franchise ought to be commensurate with population, let us compare the number of electors in two counties of Ireland and England in which the population is nearly the same—Mayo and Lincolnshire. In Mayo, which has only two representatives, the population in 1841 was 388,887 persons. The number of electors registered between the 1st February, 1835, and the 1st February 1843, was 1494. This number is subject to a deduction of say one-third for double registries, deaths, and loss of title. In Lincolnshire, which is represented by eleven members, the population was in 1841, 362,717 persons, the number of electors qualified to vote in 1840 was, county electors, 18,876—town electors, 3,999—Total, 22,875. But if it be said that the franchise ought not to be proportionate to population, but to property, let us compare two counties in regard to rateable property. In Meath the population amounted in 1841 to 183,828 persons ; the rateable rental, according to the townland valuation, which is much below the actual rent, to £527,593 ;

the number of electors registered between the 1st of February, 1835, and 1st February, 1843, 1481, subject to deduction for double registries, deaths, and loss of qualifications. In Westmoreland the population was in 1841 56,469 persons; the real property rated to poor rate in 1841 was £266,335; the number of electors qualified to vote in 1840 was, county, 4,480; town, (Kendal,) 351; total, 4,831. Now, if Meath had a constituency as large as that of Westmoreland, in proportion to the real property of each county, Meath would have about 9000 electors instead of 1481 upon the registry, of whom probably not more than 1000 are qualified to vote. Will any one who has followed me in this comparison, contend that the Irish parliamentary franchise is more liberal than that of England? But it is not enough that the parliamentary franchise of Ireland is of so restricted a nature, as almost to deprive our representation of the character of popular election. It is not enough that the constituencies are year by year dwindling away. The conservative party of Great Britain have still further sought, by the most unjustifiable and unconstitutional expedients, to frustrate the choice of the electors of Ireland in their selection of members who possess the confidence of the community. The people of Ireland have not forgotten the manner in which, at the time of the Spottiswoode subscription, you raised a cry against their representatives, and endeavoured to expel them from their seats, by bringing the power of money into action against them, under favour of the partial constitution of election committees. Neither have they forgotten the attempt made by the noble lord (Lord Stanley) to filch away their franchises under the cover of a registration bill. What is your present position with regard to this bill? When it was brought forward the people of Ireland denounced it as an insidious attempt to diminish the constituency. The noble lord at that time vehemently protested that he had no such design, and that the bill would have no such effect; yet, the right honourable baronet, the secretary for the home department, (Sir J. Graham,) announced to the house a few nights since, that after careful consideration, he had found that it would be impossible for him to frame any registration bill which

would not have the effect of diminishing the county electors of Ireland, and that, therefore, he was preparing to afford some compensation for this result of the measure which he was about to propose, by an enlargement of the franchise. With regard to the necessity of a registration bill, all parties have been unanimous. The liberal party have suffered from the want of such a measure even more than their antagonists. My honourable friend, the member for the county of Longford (Mr. Lefroy), will permit me to say, that he owes his seat in this house to the defects of our registration system. His opponent was returned by a majority which considerably exceeded 100, (I forget the exact number,) but was displaced from his seat, because the present state of the law allowed the committee to take upon themselves the office of the revising barrister, and to remove from the poll persons whose right to vote ought to have been finally established at the time of their registration. Such being the case, if the noble lord had been simply desirous to give to Ireland a good system of registration, and had referred his bill to a committee consisting of members from both sides of the house, a measure might have been agreed upon in a week, which would have accomplished the legitimate objects of registration, without annihilating the franchises of the Irish people. But such a course would not have served the purposes of party. The majorities obtained by the late opposition in the various stages of this bill, were invaluable instruments of party warfare, and it became in fact the "*cheval de bataille*" upon which they rode into office. Whilst the conservative party was in opposition, this measure was one of paramount importance in their eyes. They could not brook the delay of a single night in their attempts to advance it in its different stages. The noble lord (Lord Stanley) even volunteered to tell the house that he had left the bedside of a near relation in order to be present at its discussion. Yet, the same statesmen who were at that period eager to pass this bill with such breathless haste, in opposition to the remonstrances of the Irish people, have been now two years in power without even venturing to lay upon the table of the house, any bill for the registration of electors in Ireland. We who think that no



measure which they could bring forward, would be framed in a spirit favourable to the rights of the Irish people, have, perhaps, reason to thank them for their forbearance ; but I would appeal even to Irish members on the opposite benches, and ask them whether there is any party in Ireland which does not feel indignant, when they find their national interests thus made the stalking-horse of English faction.

In considering the constitutional representation of Ireland in the imperial legislature, I must not altogether omit to notice the injustice which was inflicted on the nobility of Ireland by the terms of the Union. The equivalent given to the Irish house of peers, in compensation for their extinction as a separate branch of the Irish parliament, was the introduction into the British house of lords of only twenty-eight representative peers. The position of the Irish nobility is marked by a degrading inferiority. The Irish peerage is a sort of hybrid dignity. An Irish lord is something between a peer and a commoner, without the faculties of either. He is excluded from his natural place in the house of Lords, and yet cannot exercise many of the privileges of a commoner ; he cannot sit on grand juries ; he cannot vote at elections ; he cannot sit in the house of commons as the representative of an Irish constituency. I have often been surprised how any man of good family can consent to remain in so ambiguous a position. Perhaps it may be said, that as the majority of the Irish house of lords were consenting parties to the Union, they have, therefore, no reason to complain ; but this remark does not apply to the dissenting minority and their descendants. So long, however, as they acquiesce without complaint in their degradation, the parliament of Great Britain can scarcely be blamed for allowing it to be perpetuated.

Let us now pass in review the principal measures relating to Ireland which have been brought forward since the enactment of the reform bill. The first of these measures was the coercion bill. I cannot advert to this violation of the constitutional liberties of Ireland, without implicating in censure many of the friends who sit around me. I will, therefore, content myself with saying, that

this measure at least was not calculated to inspire the people of Ireland with any great confidence in the British legislature.

The next Irish question to which the attention of Parliament was directed, was that of the Irish church. As no redress has yet been afforded with reference to this grievance, I am compelled to dwell upon this topic at more length. Let me first state the relative numbers of the several religious communities existing in Ireland, as ascertained in 1834 by the Commissioners of public instruction.

Members of the Established Church,	852,064
Presbyterians,       ...       ...       ...	642,356
Other Dissenters,       ...       ...	21,808
Roman Catholics,       ...       ...	6,427,712
	<hr/> 7,943,940

Now I would ask any man of common sense on either side of the house, whether it is possible that any nation could be contented with an ecclesiastical system which provides a religious establishment for the church of so small a minority of the people, whilst the remainder of the population are excluded from similar advantages. Would the people of England tolerate such an arrangement, if it were possible to conceive the existence for a single hour of such an anomaly in England? What would be their opinion as to the chances of contentment in any foreign country in which they should find (if there be a case parallel on the face of the globe) such a system in force? The answer is obvious. It can excite no surprise that the Roman Catholics of Ireland should make every effort in their power to extricate themselves from a position which necessarily impresses them with a sense of inferiority. It might naturally be expected that they should, through their representatives, apply to Parliament for relief from the encumbrance of an establishment from which they derive no benefit, and demand that the national property now in the possession of the Protestant church, should be applied to uses of a national character, from which the whole people would derive benefit. They refrained from taking this course when the subject was under consideration. They only asked that the expenditure upon the Protestant church should be brought

down to the lowest point compatible with a due provision for the religious instruction of the Protestant Episcopalians of Ireland, and that the surplus revenue should be appropriated to purposes in which Catholic and Protestant have a common interest. This moderate request, urged during several successive years, was denied by the British legislature. It might have at least been expected, that when parliament expressed its determination to uphold the Protestant establishment in all its integrity, it would have said to the Roman Catholics of Ireland,—We disapprove of the voluntary principle, and cannot consent to reduce the revenues of the Protestant church, which do not appear to us excessive in relation to the religious wants of the Protestant community; but recognizing your clergy as *de facto* the religious ministers of the great majority of the Irish nation, we are prepared to offer to them every advantage which it is consistent with their sense of religious duty to accept. We are told by you, that you are averse to the establishment of an independent provision for the Roman Catholic clergy. We cannot therefore force it upon your acceptance—but if you can point out any other mode by which we may be enabled to shew that we are not desirous to establish an invidious distinction in favour of the Protestant clergy in the midst of a Roman Catholic population, or by which we can promote the comfort of your clergy to your satisfaction, we are most ready to entertain with favour such a proposal. It is possible that the Roman Catholics of Ireland might at that time have been willing to accept from the state, not a stipendiary provision, but advantages of a different kind. I have reason to know, for instance, that the greatest possible inconvenience is sustained by the Catholic clergy, from the difficulty which they experience, particularly in country parishes, in obtaining a place of residence upon their first induction to a living. Why should not the state, if it resolves to uphold a Protestant endowment, make provision also for the purchase of glebe houses for the Catholic clergy. So also with regard to the erection of Roman Catholic churches. If you determine to apply out of a fund which belongs to the public at large, grants for the erection of Protestant churches, ought not a sense of justice to tell you, that similar contri-



butions should be offered in aid of the construction of places of worship for the great body of the Irish population. But instead of thus treating the Catholic clergy with consideration and respect, and instead of making arrangements for the convenience of the Catholic population in regard to their religious worship, you have exasperated their feelings by the contumely with which they have been treated, not only by the press of this country, but also in discussions in parliament. Even the miserable grant for Maynooth college cannot pass through this house, without furnishing topics for invective and insult against the Roman Catholic clergy. Is it surprising then that they should, almost without exception, strenuously advocate the Repeal of the Union. For my own part, if I were an Irish Catholic clergyman, I would leave no efforts untried to obtain a dissolution of the Union. It is obvious that in an Irish parliament their interests and feelings would be treated in a very different spirit. I do not say that there would be a Catholic ascendancy, for I do not believe that the Catholic population of Ireland desire such an ascendancy, but they would at least be placed upon a footing of perfect equality with the other religious communities in regard to ecclesiastical arrangements. But it is not only the Roman Catholics who have reason to complain of the mode in which the present government have dealt with the affairs of the Irish church. Great abuses still exist in its internal system. The Protestant landlords, who now pay the tithes, are beginning to be very much discontented on finding themselves called upon to contribute considerable sums of money, for which neither they nor the community at large receive any value. I will not now take upon myself the invidious task of enumerating these abuses in detail. Their existence was frequently admitted by the present ministry when the subject was formerly under discussion. Yet they have been two years in office, without having given even an indication of an intention to apply themselves to the correction of the acknowledged defects and abuses of the Irish church. In treating the whole of this subject, I feel that there is, under present circumstances, great difficulty in offering any practical suggestions for its final settlement. The principle for which I am myself disposed to contend

is, that in relation to church affairs there should be perfect equality between the different sections of the population of Ireland. I will not conceal from the house, that the mode of producing such equality, which would be most acceptable to the Roman Catholics of Ireland, would be the adoption of the voluntary principle : but if parliament is not prepared to resort to so extreme a measure, let it recognize to the fullest extent such religious equality, by making whatever arrangements for the advantage of the Catholic population of Ireland in regard to their religious worship shall be found acceptable to them, and consistent with their conscientious views. I wish particularly to guard myself from the supposition that I desire that the tithes should be given to the landlords of Ireland. For my own part, having always, upon political grounds, (although in regard to the interests of religion I am not equally convinced of the inexpediency of the voluntary system,) inclined to the opinion that an endowment by the state for the religious ministers of the population is desirable, I think that instead of making so large an allowance to the landlords, it would have been a much wiser course to have superadded the 25 per cent. which was taken from the tithe property in Ireland, to whatever surplus might arise from a reduction of the Protestant establishment within its just limits, and to have appropriated the fund so created, to the religious purposes of the Roman Catholics of Ireland.

Next in the catalogue of Irish measures is the act of Reform of the Municipal Corporations. I fear that your conduct with reference to this question affords but too much justification for those who seek a Repeal of the Union. How was it treated by the British parliament? When you passed, with the concurrence of both sides of the house, a measure of corporate reform for England, it seemed to be a natural consequence that you should extend to Ireland a similar enactment. Instead of doing so, you refused for two years your assent to any thing beyond the extinction of the former corporations. On what grounds?—Simply because the people of Ireland professed the Roman Catholic faith. If there had been any doubt about your motives, these doubts were removed by the declaration of the person whom you have since

made lord chancellor of England. He told the people of Ireland that they were not to enjoy the benefit of municipal institutions, because they were "aliens in blood, in language, and in religion." At length you found that your party interests would be injured if you persisted in resistance to the reform of our municipalities. You therefore consented to subject the corporations of Ireland to popular control, but you contrived to embarrass the measure with a variety of harassing restrictions, apparently with no other view than that of rendering it nugatory. Such conduct, founded on an unworthy distrust of the Irish people, has naturally called forth their resentment. Let me elucidate the difficulties with which corporate reform has been encumbered in Ireland, by referring to the case of Dublin. In order to qualify for the exercise of the municipal franchise in Dublin, it is necessary to pay sixteen local taxes. I will enumerate them as stated in a recent report from the corporation of Dublin:—

1. Poor Rate; 2. Parish Cess; 3. Ministers' Money; 4. Grand Jury Cess; 5. Paving and Lighting Tax; 6. Wide-street Tax; 7. Police Tax; 8. Pipe Water Tax; 9. Borough Rate; 10. Stephen's-green Tax; 11. Poddle Tax; 12. Cholera Tax; 13. Mountjoy-square Tax; 14. George's Church Tax; 15. Quay-wall Tax; 16. Merriion-square Tax. The claim for making out lists of the above taxes in 1841, amounted to £926; and the costs of printing the lists required by the Irish municipal act was, for Dublin, no less than £5000. Surely there is nothing unreasonable in the demand with which this statement is accompanied, that the corporate law of Ireland should be assimilated to that of England, and the refusal of this reasonable request, is one of the many causes which have induced the people of Ireland to seek for a Repeal of the Union.

I now come to the Irish poor law. Here again I have to complain of the over-bearing spirit which has been evinced towards Ireland, both in the enactment and in the administration of this law. After long hesitation the public opinion of Ireland at length pronounced itself in favor of a provision for the poor. The principle and the details of such a measure were thoroughly canvassed by men of the highest intelligence in Ireland. A commission of enquiry

composed for the most part of men perfectly acquainted with that country, was occupied for three years in investigating every circumstance which could form an element in the consideration of this question, and at length presented to parliament a series of reports containing elaborate statements of their views. Their suggestions were cast aside, almost as if they had been unworthy of consideration; and to Mr. Nicholls, a perfect stranger to the country, was delegated the task of framing a poor law for Ireland. He has since been invested with powers almost absolute, in order to enable him to carry his own law into effect. What has been the result? The law, which, in regard to many points, was originally defective and objectionable in its provisions, has been so administered, as that the feelings of every class of the community have been wounded, and a general feeling of repugnance has been produced against the measure itself. Nor can we be surprised at such a result, when we are made sensible of the anti-national spirit in which it has been administered. It seems to have been established as a principle, that Irishmen were wholly disqualified for the task of carrying this law into effect, and that entire ignorance of the country to which it was applied, as well as of the feelings of its inhabitants, was to be the best recommendation of those who were called to take part in its administration. Let me place before the House a view of the composition of the poor law department in Ireland.—There are six English assistant commissioners, and only four Irish. Mr. Gulson, Mr. Power, Mr. Voules, Mr. Senior, Mr. Gilbert, Mr. Muggeridge—English. Mr. Hancock, Mr. O'Donoghue, Mr. Burke, Mr. Otway—Irish. In the chief clerks' department there are three Englishmen—none Irish. In the registry department, four English and four Irish. In the head cash-keeper's department, one English and one Irish. In the copying department, one English and seven Irish. In the architect's department, (the architect himself being an Englishman,) five English and four Irish. Total—fifteen English—nineteen Irish. It thus appears that of the clerks in these offices, the majority are Irish, but it was only in April, 1843, that by the addition of six Irish clerks that majority was produced. The English, it is to be observed, are in the higher offices;



the Irish in the lower, with lesser salaries. Universal dissatisfaction has been excited by the manner in which these officials, perhaps from ignorance of the country, have carried the poor law into effect. At the commencement of this year, a general desire for enquiry pervaded all classes of the community, with a view to the correction of the system. When an Irish member, in obedience to the wishes of his constituents, brought forward a motion for a committee of enquiry, an attempt was first made to stifle the discussion, by resorting to the expedient of counting the house, and when this attempt failed, the motion was rejected, on the plausible ground, that as the government were prepared to bring forward a bill for the amendment of the Irish poor law, a committee of enquiry would rather impede than expedite the correction of its defects. At length the promised bill appears, and it is found to be so framed, as to lay the foundation for two new popular grievances, whilst its other enactments are of most doubtful expediency. Is it surprising that the people of Ireland, when they find their most important local concerns thus contemptuously and clumsily treated, should deduce from this experience the conclusion, that the British parliament is incapable of properly legislating for a country with respect to whose feelings and interests it is so imperfectly informed.

The last specimen of British legislation for Ireland is the Arms bill—resistance to which has occupied so much of that time which ought to have been bestowed on the consideration of remedial measures. The conduct of the present ministry with regard to this bill, has been most offensive to the Irish people. They have collected together all the unconstitutional clauses of former arms bills, which, having been enacted during periods of insurrection, had become obsolete after the emergency which justified their original introduction had passed away. They have called upon us not only to give to these obnoxious clauses a new sanction by their formal re-enactment, but they even propose to render them still more harsh and oppressive. In vain do the Irish members who represent the wishes of the great body of the nation, remonstrate against this proceeding. Their voice is altogether unheeded, and this odious law is to be forced by English majorities upon a reluctant

nation. How can you blame the Irish people for seeking to abstract themselves from a system of legislation which is thus regardless of their representations and remonstrances?

So much for past legislation. If I were now to advert to all that has been left undone, I could make out a case perhaps even stronger on the ground of omission than of commission, against the British government and legislature. In order to avoid trespassing too much on your time, I must content myself with noticing only one or two instances. Let me advert to your proceedings with regard to the proposal to construct a system of railways in Ireland. Those who pay any attention to what passes on the other side of the channel, know that when an attempt was made in the early part of the year 1841, to elicit a declaration of opinion on the subject of railways, the requisition for a public meeting to be held in Dublin, with a view to their promotion, was signed by almost every influential person in Ireland, of all ranks and of all parties. It may therefore be reasonably inferred, that if an Irish parliament were in existence, measures would be immediately taken for giving to Ireland the advantages of a system of railways. Gentlemen must not apply to the consideration of this question the principles which are acted upon in this country. In England there is such a superabundance of capital seeking investment, that it would be considered a grievance by English capitalists, if the state were to interfere with this means of profitable investment, by taking upon itself the construction of railways. But in Ireland the case is different. Capital is there comparatively scanty. It would seem reasonable therefore to apply to Ireland, not the principle of non-interference acted upon in England, but rather that which has regulated the conduct of other nations of the world in which capital is not so abundant as in this country, almost all of whom have brought the assistance of the state to the aid of private enterprise in the construction of public works. An attempt was made by the late government to secure to Ireland the benefit of railways by means of such a combination. In 1838 Lord Morpeth proposed that the credit of the state should be employed in raising the capital required for such undertakings in Ireland, and that the counties interested should guarantee

the payment of four per cent. as a minimum of interest, in case the receipts from the traffic did not secure this rate of profit. This proposal was effectually defeated by the party now in power, and the English capital which would have then been embarked in railways in Ireland, greatly to the advancement of the national interests of both countries, has since sought investment in foreign states, which have given to their population the advantages you have denied to Ireland. How differently have you acted towards Canada, although that colony does not contribute a fraction towards your revenue. During last session this House, almost without an observation, consented to guarantee interest of 4 per cent. on a loan of £1,500,000, about to be raised for the promotion of public works in Canada. During the very same year in which parliament rejected the proposal to allow the Irish counties to borrow £2,500,000 on their own security, with every prospect of a remunerative return from the enterprise itself, the government entered into a contract to allow £240,000 per annum for the conveyance of the mails between Great Britain and the West Indies. An annuity of this amount would have enabled the government to raise nearly as much money as would have been required to extend to every part of Ireland—north, south, and west—leading lines of railway. In the case of Ireland, internal communication by means of railways, which would probably have been a source of profit rather than of loss, would have brought into nearer approximation eight millions of your fellow-subjects. In the case of the West India contract, while the sacrifice of income is certain, the object of the undertaking is to facilitate your intercourse with colonies which do not contain a million and a half of inhabitants. Yet the right honourable baronet (Sir R. Peel) tells us, that Ireland is, upon all occasions, treated with peculiar indulgence with respect to concerns involving public expenditure.

With regard to national education, the present government take to themselves great credit for not having overthrown the system established by the noble lord (Lord Stanley). It is true that they have greatly offended some of their own partisans in Ireland, but I cannot perceive that they have established any legitimate claim upon our



gratitude. There is scarcely a Protestant clergyman in Ireland who does not consider that he has been betrayed by the right honourable baronet (Sir R. Peel) in regard to education; with what degree of justice I leave it to gentlemen on the opposite benches to determine. For my own part, I think that they have some ground for complaint. There is no reason why the religious prejudices of the minority of the people should not be respected in the case of the Protestants of Ireland, as well as in the case of the Catholics of England. I greatly prefer as the basis of a national system the principle of mixed education, such as that established by the national board; but if there be sections of the population, either amongst the Catholics or amongst the Protestants, who entertain conscientious objections to any system of education which does not inculcate their own peculiar tenets, I am not prepared to say that they ought to be excluded from all participation in the benefits of a fund to which they contribute in common with the rest of the community. My honourable friend the member for Waterford, (Mr. Wyse,) in his elaborate report from the committee of 1838, shewed how all these jarring views might be reconciled in a system of national education, without impairing its efficiency, and without violating the rights of conscience, or the principles of justice. That report still remains at once both a monument of his ability, and of the apathy of the British government, with reference to the instruction of the Irish people. When ministers claim our applause, because they have not interfered with the system of education which they found in existence, let me ask them what have they done for its extension? The funds at the command of the national board are altogether inadequate to provide for the due instruction of the population of Ireland. In their second report the commissioners estimate that an annual income of £200,000 would be required to accomplish this object. Only one-fourth of this sum is now granted. So also with regard to provincial colleges—nothing has been done by the present government. Though above four-fifths of the population of Ireland are of the Roman Catholic persuasion, Catholics are excluded from all participation in the endowments of our only university. Nor is

the academical instruction provided by Trinity College adequate to meet the requirements of so large a population as that of Ireland. Such being the case, my honourable friend in his report recommended the establishment of a college in each province, with the understanding that the Belfast Institution should be considered as the college of the province of Ulster. The proposal to establish a provincial college in the south of Ireland, was received with great satisfaction by the Irish public. Many even of those who entertain conservative opinions, signified their approval of the intention. The late government received it with favour, and requested my honourable friend (Mr. Wyse) to submit to them a detailed report upon the subject, and there is every reason to believe, that they would have sanctioned the proposal if they had continued in office. This was an opportunity of meeting the wants and satisfying the wishes of a great community, of which a wise government would gladly have availed itself, more especially as the parties locally interested in the project, were prepared to co-operate in the effort with pecuniary contributions. By the present government, nothing whatever has been done to promote so laudable an object. The report of 1838, the paper of my honourable friend, the recorded indications of public support, all lie unheeded on the shelves of the Irish office, and my honourable friend has been deterred from submitting his project to parliament, lest by the opposition of the ministry its future success may be impeded. In like manner, when an attempt was made by some disinterested members of the legal profession, to carry into effect the recommendation of another portion of this report, with reference to legal education, Sir E. Sugden, our Lord Chancellor, bringing with him to Ireland his English prejudices, successfully used his influence to defeat the attempt, although it had received the sanction of almost all the heads of the profession in Ireland, without distinction of party. A similar disregard of the educational interests of Ireland, has been evinced by the present government, in their rejection of a proposal to establish a national museum in Dublin. Every one must feel that the establishment of a good national museum would contribute greatly to the instruction, as well as to the enjoyment

of our community. The committee, of which I was chairman, appointed in 1836, to inquire into the proceedings of the Royal Dublin Society, suggested that in case the society should adopt certain recommendations contained in our report, it would be desirable to connect with that institution a national museum. The society having acceded to all our proposals, applied in the early part of this year to the treasury, for means to fulfil that portion of the recommendations of this report which related to the enlargement of their museum. Their request has been denied upon pretexts altogether frivolous. Now, when parliament grants, and in my opinion most wisely grants, large sums annually for the support of the British Museum, amounting during several successive years to as much as £80,000 per annum, is it not natural that the people of Ireland should expect that some effort should be made to give to Dublin the advantages of a similar institution. Can there be a doubt that an Irish parliament would found such a museum? Upon what ground then is this disregard of the most legitimate claims of the Irish people to be justified?

I have now to notice the characteristic features by which the administrative government of Ireland has been distinguished, and I am compelled to designate it as eminently anti-national. In all free states the distribution of patronage forms an important element in the machinery of government. Amongst the most recent examples of the mischievous consequences which may arise from an unwise employment of this engine of power, I may remind the House, that no cause was more efficient in producing the disruption of Belgium from Holland, than the systematic exclusion of the Catholics of Belgium from the administrative government of the Netherlands. In Canada discontents, which ended in rebellion, were excited chiefly by the exclusion from office of the native inhabitants of French origin. Now let us see how the people of Ireland have been treated in reference to the distribution of patronage. Look at every department of local or general administration in Ireland, and you will find that Irishmen are studiously excluded from all the superior offices of direction and control. I will quote in support of this assertion the following extract from the Dublin Evening Mail, a con-

servative journal, which is conducted with much ability. Let me first observe that the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland is an Englishman; the Chief Secretary is an Englishman; the Lord Chancellor is an Englishman. The writer in this journal proceeds, in answer to an article in the London Times relative to this topic of complaint :

“The Archbishop of Dublin is an Englishman; the Chief Administrator of the Irish Poor Law is an Englishman; the Paymaster of Irish Civil Services is a Scotchman; the Chief Commissioner of Irish Public Works is an Englishman; the ‘Teller’ of the Irish Exchequer is an Englishman; the Chief Officer of the Irish Constabulary is a Scotchman; the Chief Officer of the Irish Post Office is an Englishman; the Collector of Excise is a Scotchman; the Head of the Revenue Police is an Englishman; the Second in command is a Scotchman; the persons employed in the Collection of the Customs, &c., are English and Scotch in the proportion of thirty-five to one. But the Times may perhaps observe, ‘true, but all this is only the elucidation of our plan for unbarring the gates of preferment unsparingly, impartially, and honestly.’ Scotchmen and Englishmen are placed in office in Ireland, and Irishmen in return in Scotland and England, in order to draw closer the bonds of union between the three united nations. Again, let us see how facts actually stand: there are Cabinet Ministers, Englishmen 10, Scotchmen 3, Irish 0.”

The Duke of Wellington is so much denationalized, that I believe he scarcely considers himself an Irishman, and certainly cannot be called a representative of Irish interests in the cabinet.

“Lords of the Treasury, Englishmen 4, Scotchman 1, Irishman 1; Clerks of the Treasury, Englishmen or Scotchmen 112, Mr. Fitzgerald (query an Irishman) 1; Members of the Lord Steward’s and Lord Chamberlain’s departments of the Royal Household, Englishmen and Scotchmen 225, Irishmen 4; British Ministers to Foreign Courts, Englishmen and Scotchmen 131, Irishmen 4; Poor Law Commissioners, Englishmen 3, Irishmen 0. We presume” adds the editor, “that these facts shew that the natives of the three kingdoms are all placed



upon an equal footing, the chances of access to preferments to an Englishman or Scotchman in Ireland, being in the few instances that have occurred to us while writing, as 6 to 0; while the probability of an Irishman obtaining place in England, appears from an analogous calculation, to be in the proportion of 491 to 10, or as 1 to 50. We could easily swell," he adds, "this list, were it necessary. Ireland has been always used by English ministers as a means of providing for poor relations, dependents, and partisans. Our highest as well as our lowest offices have been prostituted for this purpose. What would be thought of an Irish lawyer being called over as Lord Chancellor of England? yet we are forced to take English lawyers as our lord chancellors. So through all departments of the government, injustice to Ireland everywhere meets us, and so will things continue, until we learn to think less about party, and more about our country."

It is only just to the present government to say, that they are not more exposed to the reproach of having excluded Irishmen from office than their predecessors. I am bound to tell my friends at this side of the house, that with respect to this topic of complaint, no act of the present government has given more general dissatisfaction than was exhibited when an affront was offered to Lord Plunkett, one of our great historical characters, by forcing him to resign the office of lord chancellor, in order that an Anglo-Scotch common lawyer, for whom personally I entertain the greatest respect, might be enabled to fill for the space of a few weeks the situation of our first equity judge, previous to the abandonment of office by the late government. Neither, indeed, do I blame the government of England so much as ourselves, with reference to this cause of complaint. We have been so much in the habit, on both sides, of endeavouring to convince the world that our antagonists are unfit to be entrusted with power, that it is not surprising that we should have succeeded in convincing bystanders, that Irishmen are quite incapable of administering the affairs of their own country. I am sorry also to add, that in general the contending parties in Ireland appear to witness with more satisfaction the appointment of a stranger to office, than that of a native whose opinions are opposite to their own, and this feeling

being mutual, the exclusion is perpetuated with a view to the satisfaction of the complaining party. It is singular, that what was said of us by Swift a century since, should still be true.

“ The Irish had long made a deuce of a clatter,  
And wrangled and fought about *meum* and *tuum*,  
'Till England stept in, and decided the matter,  
By kindly converting it all to a *suum*.”

Speaking seriously, however, I would ask is it fair to native talent, thus to take away the prizes of every profession from those who have earned them by a life of honorable toil? If, indeed, there were a fair reciprocity between the three kingdoms, there would be no ground for complaint. But I would ask, if a single instance can be named in which an Irish clergyman has been taken from the active exercise of his profession in Ireland, in order that he might be appointed as bishop in England. I might extend the question to the law and to other professions. It is true, that a few Irishmen occasionally force themselves by their talents into office in this country, in spite of the most adverse circumstances, but before they can do so, they must become completely denationalized. They must cease to identify themselves with Irish feelings and interests, and dissociate themselves, as much as possible, from connection with their own country. I must not omit here to mention a complaint which I have heard repeatedly made by persons connected with trade. When the revenue establishments of Ireland were withdrawn and consolidated with those of England, a formal pledge was given, that a due proportion of the revenue officers to be thereafter appointed, should be always taken from among the natives of Ireland. I hold in my hand a printed statement prepared some years since by a person well acquainted with the excise department, in which it is shewn that this pledge has been forgotten or violated, and that Irishmen are systematically excluded from the superior offices of excise. This paper is too long to allow of its being read upon the present occasion; but the government and parliament are bound to enquire whether these allegations are well founded. The result is stated to be most unfavourable to the interests of those who are connected with any trade in Ireland

which is subjected to fiscal regulations. If a charge is to be made, or a defence to be offered to an unjust accusation, the Irish trader alleges that he is always encountered by a strong anti-national prejudice, which predisposes the public officer to whom he appeals, to take a view of his case unfavourable to his character and interests. Time will not allow me to elucidate this ground of complaint by a reference to particular instances. Indeed, if I were to make a statement of cases of injustice towards individuals, (of which the late mail coach contract, commonly called the Croal contract, is one of the most recent specimens,) I know not when I should be able to bring to an end my observations upon the administration of Irish affairs. I turn therefore to an important question of public policy, and charge the government with having acted in an anti-Catholic as well as anti-national spirit in their distribution of patronage. Considering the known sagacity of the premier—considering that he volunteered to tell the house upon a former occasion, that he knew how difficult was the task of governing Ireland, I am at a loss to understand how he could have shewn such fatuity in his conduct towards the majority of the Irish people. Never had a minister a fairer opportunity of conciliating the good will of a nation, without making concessions of principle, than that which was presented to the right honorable baronet (Sir Robert Peel) upon his accession to office. After the results of the late general election had shewn that a change of ministry was unavoidable, the people of Ireland exhibited a marked disposition to give a fair trial to the new administration. For the first twelve months after their appointment, there was an extraordinary lull in agitation. Some might have even mistaken this tranquillity for apathy and indifference; but it was in truth a period of rational observation. The Irish government was to be judged by its conduct, and not condemned by anticipation. Of Lord De Grey nothing was known, except that he was a man highly respected in his private character. Towards the noble lord, (Lord Eliot,) the most favourable prepossessions were entertained. His conduct with respect to the municipal bill was remembered with kindly feelings, and the liberality of his declarations at the hustings in Cornwall,

was calculated to raise the most favourable expectations. It is painful to me to tell him that these expectations have been disappointed. I know not whether he has failed to carry into effect the policy then avowed by him, from want of ability to realize his own views. He is, in truth, powerless. Not possessing a seat in the cabinet, he is little more than under-secretary to the right honorable baronet (Sir J. Graham), who is, in reality, the ruler of Ireland. It excites in me much surprise, that a person occupying the high station of the noble lord, should consent to be held responsible for a policy which he does not himself direct. If, on the other hand, he really approves of the system of government now adopted towards Ireland, I know not what we gain by his reputed liberality. The general result of the principle which has been acted upon towards the Roman Catholics of Ireland, has been to leave no link of connection between the government and the majority of the nation. Such a state of things is the more dangerous, because the tendency of all recent legislation has been to increase the political power of the Roman Catholics, and nothing can be more unwise than to give power to men, unless you are prepared to allow them to enjoy its fruits. The emancipation act—the reform bill—the corporation act—the poor law—have given to the Irish people organs for the expression of the national will; yet no effort has been made to bring these powers into harmony with the executive. When the Roman Catholic finds himself proscribed by a system of exclusion, is it not natural that he should assist in the restoration of a legislature to Ireland, the existence of which would compel the British government to conduct the affairs of Ireland in a manner compatible with his own interests, and acceptable to the wishes of the nation? This feeling is strengthened by the contrast presented in the principles of government adopted towards Canada, and towards Ireland. There are many points of analogy between the circumstances of Canada and of Ireland. In Canada, as in Ireland, you endeavoured for many years to govern by means of a minority, for the benefit of a minority. The attempt led to perpetual contention between the executive and the legislature. These collisions terminated in a rebellion, which cost this country



more than three millions of money, and very nearly involved it in a war with the United States. At length you felt that its possession on these terms was a burden rather than a benefit, and you had recourse to a wiser policy; you sent out one of your ablest statesmen, Lord Durham, to examine personally into the causes of Canadian discontent. In the report which he made after his return from this mission, he told you that the continued difficulties which had arisen in the government of Canada, had sprung from the attempt which had been made to conduct the affairs of that colony through executive officers who did not possess the confidence of the legislature and of the people. He recommended that in future the executive should be brought into harmony with the representative assembly, by the employment in official station, of those who enjoyed the respect and support of the majority of the people. This principle of government was partially adopted by the noble lord the member for London, (Lord John Russell,) and has since been fully carried into effect by Sir Charles Bagot, under the sanction of the present administration. The people of Ireland are unable to understand why one system of government should be adopted in Canada, and another of a totally opposite character should, greatly to their disadvantage, be applied to Ireland. Will you leave yourselves open to the imputation of having given to Canada, through fear, advantages which you withhold from Ireland, because you imagine that you can oppress us with impunity?

Having completed my review of the causes of discontent which are connected with legislative and administrative government, I have now to notice those which arise from the social condition of the country. Whatever might be the prosperity of the people, the causes to which I have already adverted would produce dissatisfaction, but undoubtedly the national discontent is aggravated by the pressure of distress upon the various classes of the community. A general complaint is heard throughout Ireland, that trade is less flourishing than before the Union. The population has increased by three millions, and therefore the actual amount of consumption is probably greater; but it is much to be doubted whether command of the comforts

of life has increased in the same proportion as the population.\* With regard to Dublin, this decline of prosperity cannot be denied, and there is but too much reason to fear that similar complaints from other parts of the country are equally well founded. In reference to the condition of the labouring classes, I am persuaded that at no period of the history of Ireland, did they experience equal difficulty in obtaining the means of subsistence; and this state of things is the more painful, because their moral habits are much improved, and because it can no longer be said that their destitution is to be traced to intemperance. The great majority of the agricultural labourers of Ireland are unable, during several months in the year, to obtain the scanty pittance of eight pence for their day's toil. It is obvious therefore that life could not be supported, if the family of the labourer were to depend upon wages alone. He accordingly provides for their subsistence by taking each year a spot of ground, on which he grows as much potatoes as are sufficient for sustenance throughout the year. The difficulty of procuring such portions of land—called in Ireland *con-acre* or *quarter ground*—increases every year. In like manner, the universal disposition which now prevails on the part of landlords to consolidate small tenements, presses very severely upon the poor farmer. In some instances the clearance system, by which small holdings are depopulated, has operated most injuriously on the peace of the country. The unsatisfactory state of the relations between landlord and tenant, is the source of that cry for *fixity of tenure*, of which so much has been heard of late. The meaning of this expression does not appear as yet to be very well defined. As used by some of its advocates, it means that the tenant who happens to be in casual pos-

\* In answering this part of Mr. O'Brien's argument, Lord Eliot dwelt upon the increase of exports and imports since the Union, as evidence of increased prosperity. When a country exports the surplus of its productions, after all its own population have been amply provided for, an increase of exports may be considered as a test of increasing prosperity; but we must not rely upon such an increase as an infallible indication of improvement. If the ox which was formerly sent to Kilkenny, to be exchanged for Irish cloth, is now sent to Leeds, in exchange for English manufactures, the table of exports and imports would exhibit an increase concurrently with an actual decline of trade in Ireland.

session of land, shall acquire a sort of fee-farm right in it, subject only to a fixed rent to the landlord. The objection to this scheme is, first that it transfers the proprietary right from the landlord to the casual tenant, who may in many instances be a person little deserving of such an advantage; and next, that it makes no provision for the interests of the labourer, who under almost all circumstances is more an object of compassion than the tenant, for whose benefit this plan has been devised. According to others, *fixity of tenure* means that the tenant shall in all cases be entitled to obtain a lease for a certain term of years. This plan is open to the objection already stated, that it disregards the claim of the labourer. It is also obvious that unless it be accompanied by some regulations to guard against the imposition of an excessive rent—regulations incompatible with freedom of contract—no real benefit is conferred upon the tenant; because the landlord will indemnify himself for compulsion to grant a lease, by exacting the highest possible rent. The third plan of *fixity of tenure* is that of my honorable friend the member for Rochdale, (Mr. S. Crawford,) who proposes that the occupying tenant shall be compensated by his landlord for whatever capital he may invest in substantial improvements. Though there is great difficulty in framing the details of such a measure, its principle is perfectly just, and well deserves the consideration of the House. I am fully sensible of all the difficulties which surround every proposal of this kind, but I am convinced, that if a bold attempt be made to grapple with these difficulties, much may be done to ameliorate the relations between landlord and tenant. Let a committee be appointed, first to ascertain facts connected with ejectments, about which the most contradictory assertions are made, and next to devise remedies. I am persuaded that even though it should be found impossible to meet existing evils by direct interference between landlord and tenant, much might be done by indirect legislation. Let it be remembered, that it is to collateral legislation that we chiefly owe the present condition of the tenantry of Ireland. The sub-division of farms was first greatly promoted by the efforts of the landlords to obtain political influence through their forty-shilling freeholders, and has subse-

quently been checked by their disfranchisement. The present undue tendency to depopulate small farms, has in like manner been augmented by the operation of the subletting act, and I much fear that it will be still further increased by the proposed enactments of the Bill for the amendment of the Irish poor law. As the interests of the tenantry have been already injuriously affected by indirect legislation, so it is to be hoped, that by a series of beneficial measures, counter-tendencies may be created, which will produce an advantageous change in their condition, as well as in that of the labouring classes.

I have now completed this exposition of my views respecting the principal causes of the discontent which exists in Ireland. Whether I have traced it to its real sources or not, its existence is unquestionable. A large part of the nation is impressed with a settled belief, that there is no hope of obtaining from the British parliament a due consideration of the rights and interests of Ireland. They therefore seek good government through the instrumentality of a domestic legislature. I am most anxious to impress the house with the conviction which I myself sincerely entertain, that the cry for Repeal is not the voice of treason, but the language of despair. Of those who seek a dissolution of the Union, not one man in a thousand at present wishes for separation from this country. Nor does there at present exist the least perceptible desire for a republic. Still less is there any wish for a change in the person of the monarch. The people of Ireland have no ground for complaint against their present sovereign. They believe her to be animated by the most kindly feelings towards them, and accordingly they entertain towards her the most enthusiastic attachment. Is it not enough to excite indignation, that our gracious Queen should not be allowed to visit her Irish dominions, to receive there the acclamations of her loyal subjects, because her ministers fear that with those acclamations will be mingled signs of disapprobation towards themselves.

I have now to ask parliament what course it will adopt in the present crisis of Irish affairs. A few weeks since I should have addressed this question to the government, but from them we have now nothing to hope. They have



pronounced their *ultimatum*. "Conciliation has been carried to the utmost," is the language of the home-secretary, who now rules Ireland. "Arms bills and measures of coercion, if necessary, are all that we have to offer you. Redress you need not expect from us." I appeal, therefore, to you, the representatives of the nation, and ask you, what course will you pursue? Will you recur to a mild and beneficent policy, and strive to suppress agitation by removing the grounds of national discontent? Or will you fold your arms in inaction, and wait the course of events, without endeavouring to guide them? Or will you attempt to stifle the national voice by measures of coercion? I do not think you have had much encouragement to proceed in such a course. Every indication which has been already made on this side of the channel, of such an intention, has been received with shouts of defiance on the other. It needs no political sagacity to predict, that if any portion of the population of Ireland, whilst the country is divided in opinion, should resort to force, a rebellion would be speedily crushed by the power of England, supported by a British minority. But, on the other hand, I will assert with equal confidence, that if the people of Ireland abstain from violence, and rely only upon moral organization, supported by the justice of their cause, and the sympathy of mankind, they will sooner or later compel you, either to accept the alternative of a Repeal of the Union, or to place the government and institutions of that country on such a footing as shall be acceptable to its inhabitants. I listened with feelings of mingled regret and indignation to the right honourable baronet, (Sir R. Peel,) when he declared, that under any circumstances he would hazard the chances of a civil war, rather than concede a Repeal of the Union, even to the unanimous demand of the Irish nation. This ill-advised declaration, so offensive to our national pride, compels me to tell him, that if the people of Ireland were unanimous in desiring the restoration of their parliament, they would obtain it without even striking a blow. There are numberless methods by which a nation of eight millions can give effect to their resolute determination. I will only mention one; I name it because I have seen you during the last twelve months prostrate

your national dignity, suspend your legislation, derange your finances, and disturb an important branch of your trade, in the hope of obtaining from the kingdom of Portugal a treaty of commerce, which would enable you to sell to that country an additional amount of woollen goods to the value of a hundred thousand pounds. When I see you making such sacrifices, in order to obtain this mighty boon, I would remind the representatives of the manufacturing towns in England, that a non-intercourse resolution passed by the Irish people, would take from them a market for their goods to the value of eight or ten millions. Let it not be said, that self-interest would prevent them from depriving themselves of the benefits which arise to both countries from the mutual interchange of their productions. A nation which has voluntarily imposed upon itself abstinence from an indulgence to which it was addicted, by refraining from every intoxicating beverage, is capable of making greater sacrifices than that of consuming at home its own agricultural produce, greatly to the advantage of the domestic manufactures of Ireland. But if, at all hazards, the right honourable baronet should determine to go to war with us, I would ask him, where are the forces at his command? In the British army there are 40,000 Irish soldiers, every one of whom is animated by sentiments as patriotic as those of the classes from which they were drawn. Let me tell him, that in such a struggle, the chances of failure are at least equal to those of success. If he should succeed, what is his gain? In Ireland—widespread, universal desolation. To England—a countless cost. Should he fail, then indeed the glory of England will have departed for ever. History will tell of you, that at the moment when you had reached the summit of your power—when by peaceful colonization you had laid the foundations of mighty kingdoms at the Antipodes—when you had made the Ganges and the Indus your own streams—when by the combined prowess of British and Irish valour you had planted your standards upon the walls of the ancient capital of China, heretofore unapproached by European arms—you fell from the lofty pinnacle of your greatness, because you preferred to trample upon the rights of a sister kingdom, rather than to win its affections by

kindness and justice. I do not envy the feelings of that minister who shall go to his sovereign and say—When I took office I found the people of Ireland tranquil and contented; I found them devotedly attached to your majesty's person. By misgovernment I induced them to seek the restoration of their own parliament, and after uniting them in an universal confederation to obtain it, I went to war with them, rather than yield to the national demand; and now, may it please your majesty, I have to announce the melancholy truth, that you have lost one-third of your bravest and most attached subjects. I know that I shall be blamed for holding this language, but I should deem myself unworthy of the country to which I belong, if I were to listen in silence to such a declaration as that of the right honourable baronet, without retorting the threat which it conveyed; and it is better you should hear in time the voice of friendly warning, than that you should too late deplore the results of your own blindness and injustice.

Before I conclude, I shall not, on this occasion, shrink from expressing my own opinions with reference to the Repeal of the Union. As regards personal motives, I have nothing to gain, and much to risk, by the severance of the legislative connexion of the two countries. As regards convictions, I have always been of opinion, that a perfect incorporation of the three kingdoms, accompanied by a due consideration of the peculiar circumstances of Ireland, and an entire equality of civil rights, would be more advantageous to all, than the maintenance of separate parliaments. Nor am I insensible to the difficulties which beset the attempt to dissolve the Union. But, at the same time, I am bound to declare, that such an incorporation has not yet been realized; and that looking back to the history of the last forty years, it is my conscientious conviction, that Ireland would be at this moment a more happy and more prosperous country than it now is, if the Union of 1800 had not taken place. I have now sat for nearly twelve years in the British house of commons, and during that period have wasted as much time within its walls as any of my cotemporaries, and if I were asked honestly to state the result of my observations, I am afraid I should be com-

pelled to say, that with Irish feelings this House has little sympathy—little knowledge of Irish wants, and still less disposition to provide for those wants. I have seen, during session after session, measures which would have been hailed with enthusiasm by an Irish parliament, though supported by a large majority of the Irish members, yet by this house almost contemptuously rejected. I have seen even during the present session, measures forced upon a reluctant nation by English majorities, notwithstanding the remonstrances of those who represent the majority of the Irish people. I have seen the laws, institutions, and customs of Great Britain pleaded against us, whenever we have asked for deviations from your system which would have been advantageous to Ireland; whilst at the same time, when we have sought a full participation in the benefits of your institutions, we have been told that the circumstances of the two countries are wholly different, and require separate legislation. With this experience, is it surprising that I should often doubt whether the abstract opinions which I have formed in favor of an Union, such as seems never about to be realized, are consistent with the duty which I owe to the country possessing the first claim upon my devotion. What is it to me that the maintenance of the Union is essential to the strength and security of the empire, if it do not bring with it welfare and happiness to my native land? Still, however, I cling to the hope of good government from a British parliament. When that hope is extinct, I shall not fear to contemplate the remaining alternative; nor, if I should be compelled to espouse the cause of Repeal, shall I be the least earnest of its advocates! I have satisfied myself that it is practicable—I have satisfied myself that it is consistent with the allegiance which I owe to my sovereign. Looking to the future, rather than to the past, I am not yet fully satisfied that it is equally advantageous to Ireland, as such an Union as I have described. Give to us then, who still cling to the legislative connexion, with the hope of obtaining justice at your hands, but with the determination that if it be withheld, our country shall command our services—give us, by your decision this night, something which we may present to our fellow-countrymen, as a pledge of your



disposition to repair the many wrongs which have been inflicted upon Ireland—give us arguments which we may address to them, when they tell us of the many instances which prove that Ireland has lost much and gained little by the Union. Depend upon it, that though in making such atonement, your national pride may be hurt, your position among the nations of the world will be exalted. The same sympathy which you feel for oppressed Poland, other nations bestow upon Ireland. A country which, if well governed, would be the right arm of your strength, is now a source of weakness; and if a French army should, at this juncture, cross the Pyrenees, it would do so because that nation believes that your military resources are required in Ireland. I speak not of more disastrous contingencies, nor will I use one word of menace; but the aspect of affairs around us, justifies me in assuring you, that you cannot more effectually confirm the good will of those allies who wish you well, or defeat the machinations of foes who are jealous of our national glory, than by following the course which I now invite you to pursue, in resorting to measures which shall soothe animosities, obliterate distinctions founded upon differences of race and of religion, and consolidate the Union of the two kingdoms by the bonds of equal laws, common rights, and of international justice. I now move “that this House will resolve itself into a Committee, for the purpose of taking into consideration the causes of discontent at present prevailing in Ireland, with a view to the redress of grievances, and to the establishment of a system of just and impartial government in that part of the united kingdom.”

The above motion was negatived by a majority of 79—the numbers having been 164 and 243.



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